

ARTICLE APPENDIX  
ON PAGE 8

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## *French Action Puts World of Espionage in Spotlight*

# Nations Tolerate Spying—Up to a Point

By ROBERT C. TOTH, *Times Staff Writer*

WASHINGTON—The French government's expulsion of 45 Soviet diplomats and two journalists on accusations of spying has put a rare spotlight on the shrouded struggle between the Kremlin and the counterespionage agencies of the West.

When the news broke, the French action appeared to be linked to the defection last June of Vladimir Kuzichkin, a Soviet KGB officer, who was presumably identifying Kremlin agents in Western Europe. The Soviet officer defected to the British, and the French expulsions followed the deportation of three Soviet citizens by the British government last week. Soviets were thrown out of other European countries earlier this year.

### Unwritten Rules of Intelligence

But according to U.S. intelligence sources interviewed here Tuesday, the French crackdown appeared to be a product of long preparation, attributable more to dogged counterintelligence surveillance than to new information from a single defector or double agent.

And the immediate trigger for the French move may have been the discovery of some particularly blatant—but thus far undisclosed—So-

viet espionage operation that violated the unwritten rules governing acceptable conduct by foreign intelligence agencies.

While spying is illegal, all governments engage in it and up to a point tolerate espionage by foreign powers within their own borders. But operations by foreign agents that go beyond the understood limits can bring quick retaliation, according to the sources here, who declined to be identified.

Another important reason for the mass expulsion—the largest in French history—may have been a desire to provide a graphic demonstration that the Socialist government of President Francois Mitterrand, despite the two Communists in the Cabinet, is tougher toward Moscow than its conservative predecessor or some other conservative European governments.

The sources said that Mitterrand has always shown more zeal in curtailing Soviet espionage than former President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, whom he succeeded in 1981.

Mitterrand has a long memory, one source said, alluding to his belief that Moscow was responsible for his defeat by Giscard d'Estaing in the 1978 elections. In 1978, the French Communist Party suddenly withdrew its support of Mitterrand in the midst of the campaign.

Mitterrand apparently believed reports, which were widespread at the time, that the French Communists pulled out on orders from the Kremlin.

The largest previous mass expulsion of Soviets on espionage charges, which occurred in 1971 when Britain threw out 105 Russians, was generally attributed to the defection of a single Soviet KGB agent. Parallels with that British case led initially to speculation that a lone defector also precipitated Tuesday's French action.

### Can Mask True Sources

One source here pointed out, however, that the surfacing of a Soviet defector, whether a member

of the KGB secret police or the Soviet military intelligence agency (GRU), can provide an opportunity for a Western government to take strong action against Kremlin agents that had been contemplated for a long time.

Such a defection, this source explained, makes it possible for Western counterintelligence agencies to cloud the real source or sources of information that led to identification of Soviet diplomats or journalists as spies. Such sources might be double agents, working both for the Western government and the Soviets. They are often ethnic Russians forced to spy for Moscow under threat of harm to relatives still living in the Soviet Union.

Exposure of those sources as a result of a crackdown could not only jeopardize the relatives but also end the double agent's value, the source said. As a result, a Western government may prefer to maintain close watch over known intelligence agents in a foreign embassy, feeding them wrong information as well as correct data of relatively small value, rather than expelling them immediately.

Expulsion of Soviet agents also risks reprisals in Moscow against Western diplomats, some of whom are presumably also engaged in espionage activities and probably known to the counterintelligence department of the KGB.

For all these reasons, a government may delay expulsion of known agents until the cover of a defection provides an excuse for a mass expulsion, one that appears linked to the defector's identification of his colleagues.

American sources said, however, that expulsions can also be triggered by some brash action by espionage agents of a foreign embassy that seems particularly insulting to the host country and crosses the ill-defined line between tolerable and intolerable behavior.